

Editorial:

# SAG Awards Pave Way for Oscar Predictions

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Anyone who has read one of my previous columns can tell you one thing for certain: I am a movie geek. I gladly admit to being an enthusiastic fan of the cinema as well as a fan of the film industry's biggest night of entertainment, the Oscars. Though I enjoy many other high-profile competitions (my Cowboys will be victorious next year), the Oscars has always been my particular favorite. The nominations for this year's Academy Awards prizes have already been released. Moreover, after the recent Screen Actor's Guild Awards crowned *No Country for Old Men* as this year's true film gem, it seems the road to the Oscars has already been paved out.

I have other ideas and this brings me to my next little point. I would like to use this opportunity to introduce a new method that I plan on continuing to use in future articles. My father has a saying that I have long teased him about. Instead of saying the "thing is," my father says "the thing of it is." Now I have often poked fun at this grammatical error, but I have found that this phrase is an effective way to begin an argument. Therefore, I offer you the first of many "The thing of it is" statements.

The Academy of American Motion Pictures and Sciences has long been the standard for picking the best films of the year. Time and time again, however, it has overlooked great films that just aren't classy or sophisticated enough for its liking. The thing of it is is just because the academy overlooks a film doesn't mean it isn't good. Each moviegoer has his or her own unique tastes, and just because those inclinations may not fit with the Oscar picks doesn't mean that the viewer has bad taste in movies. In fact, I have views that are often different than that of the Academy. Now this is hardly an important issue but I am using my first "The thing of it is is" statement to dare

readers to be different and have their own opinions. With that, I present My 2007 Oscar picks.

I begin with my pick for best actor. I have always been fascinated by actors who have taken on the role of cowboy. Though *No Country for Old Men's* Josh Brolin does not play a traditional gunslinger, the cowboy mentality is still there. As Lewellen Moss, a good old boy caught up in a two-million dollar drug deal gone wrong, Brolin displays the kind of quick thinking and acting that movie cowboys have used for years. Brolin is the perfect tall dark stranger so common to the Western genre. He speaks slowly but to the point. Considering that his character is always in "think fast" situations, Brolin's performance is pitch-perfect. He also perfects the use of the tough guy "million-yard stare". Lewellen is being hunted by a ruthless killer, but Brolin's expressions allow the audience to build confidence in the character. He says volumes without even speaking. Though the film was nominated for a handful of Oscars, this performance was overlooked. To me, this is quite a shame considering it is undeniably the best male performance of the year.

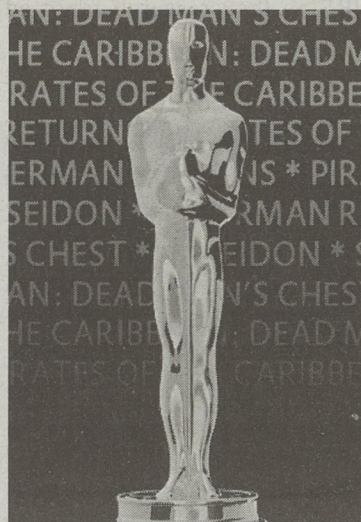
Next is this year's pick for best supporting actor. As Ritchie Roberts, a New York cop on the trail of an infamous killer and drug dealer, *American Gangster's* Russell Crowe is a marvel. The actor plays a man who has failed in every aspect of his life except his job. Ritchie is a cheating husband and a deadbeat father, but he is also one of the only honest, decent cops left in the corrupt 1970's New York Narcotics Department. Crowe plays this character as if he were born for the part. His accent and attitude are perfect. Though he is not an honorable man, Crowe makes you feel for Ritchie. He is just trying to succeed at the only thing he has ever been good at. While I was somewhat disappointed with *American Gangster*, Crowe's inspired performance makes the film worth a look.

The men were not the only ones shelling out award-worthy performances this year. There were many great female performances in 2007, but Amy Adams' performance as a fairy tale princess stood out among the rest. Adams stars in *Enchanted* as Princess Giselle, a maiden from an animated fairy tale world that is sent to the real world by an evil queen. Adams is peppy, funny, and undeniably charming as a "fish out of water." She never for one second breaks away from the fact that she is a true fairy tale princess and this allows the audience to fall in love with her. Also, Amy Adams must be commended on her impressive singing in the film. Though she was ignored by the Academy voters, Adams' performance proves she is an undeniably huge talent.

My pick for this year's best supporting actress award goes to an actress in a role quite different than the one that Amy Adams shined so brightly in. Marcia Gay Harden generated real chills as The Mist's frightening religious fanatic, Miss Carmody. I mentioned Harden's performance in my previous review of *The Mist*, but description of her brilliance bears repeating. She is truly mind-numbing as a woman who has become so overcome by her own beliefs that she appears to have lost her soul. The film features many hair-raising creatures, but Carmody is the most hair-raising of all. She is manipulative to the point where she seems more dangerous than what is lurking in "the mist." Harden gives the audience a character who they can truly love to hate. Every film has a villain, but few of them can generate the kind of energy that Miss Carmody does. Marcia Gay Harden creates a chilling female character that is reminiscent of the kind of role that legendary actresses like Betty Davis once played. I believe that seeing her in more roles like this in the future would be quite a treat.

Performances are the heart of a film, but the direction is the brains. This brings me to my pick

for this year's best director prize. Frank Darabont created several critically praised films in the 1990s such as *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Green Mile*. I am a huge fan of both of these films, but it was Darabont's transition from drama to horror that truly impressed me. His vision for



Stephen King's *The Mist* is nothing short of award-worthy. The director used state of the art CGI, an incredible cast, and a moving score to create a very memorable film. The director created a movie that sores high above most modern horror films due to his attention to detail. The creatures are intricate and horrifying, the grocery store set creates a great sense of realism, and every actor is at the top of their game. This proves that Darabont put a great deal of care into dealing with every aspect of the film—he wasn't just out to create another simple horror flick. He set out to make a very deep and involving film, and he succeeded. The Academy has never looked favorably upon horror films, and I believe that is why they have overlooked Mr. Darabont's achievement. Yet I feel that this director did something very fresh and inventive, and in today's film world that is quite rare.

My final pick is the best picture award. There were a handful of outstanding films in 2007, but there was one that stood out from the rest. That film was *Eastern Promises*. I have always

been a fan of gangster films and this is what initially drew me to this story of a Russian crime syndicate in London, England. It was the exploration of a family and their secrets, however, which truly made me fall in love with the film. The film digs deep into the lives of three men.

The first is Semyon, the owner of a successful Russian restaurant. He appears to be a sweet old man, but beneath his gentle smile lay many secrets. He is a ruthless killer whose rape and murder of a fourteen-year old girl has put the police hot on his trail. He is a man who is trying to hold his family together while his past sins threaten to ruin everything that he has built. The second character is Kirill, his son. He is a soldier for the crime family and is constantly seeking approval from his father. He wants to make him proud but has a secret that will never allow this to happen. Kirill is gay, a fact that his father would never except. The third character is Nikolai, the family's limo driver played brilliantly by Viggo Mortensen. Though only a driver, Nikolai is quickly working his way through the ranks of the Russian mob underworld. But like Semyon and Kirill, he too has a secret. However, I won't reveal that because finding out firsthand is much more satisfying.

*Eastern Promises* is a film in which nothing is as it seems. It is full of brilliant twists and turns, jaw-dropping performances, and deep insight into the inner workings of a family. The film's brilliance is no surprise to me considering that the film is directed by David Cronenberg, the director behind one of my favorite films, *A History of Violence*. With *Eastern Promises*, Cronenberg once again creates an engaging and moving film worthy of Oscar gold. Though Viggo earned an Oscar nomination, the film was still overlooked. Nevertheless, I am happy to crown this amazing film Best Picture of the Year.